

*The Impact of large-scale Surveys  
on Pulsating Star Research  
IAU Colloquium, Vol. 196, 1999  
?, eds.*

## **Photometry of pulsating stars in the Magellanic Clouds as observed in the MOA project**

J. B. Hearnshaw

*Dept. of Physics and Astronomy, University of Canterbury,  
Christchurch, New Zealand*

I. A. Bond

*Dept. of Physics, University of Auckland, New Zealand and Dept.  
Physics and Astronomy, University of Canterbury, New Zealand*

N. J. Rattenbury

*Dept. of Physics, University of Auckland, New Zealand*

S. Noda

*Solar-Terrestrial Environment Laboratory, Nagoya University, Nagoya,  
Japan*

M. Takeuti

*Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan*

F. Abe<sup>1</sup>, B. S. Carter<sup>2</sup>, R. J. Dodd<sup>2</sup>, M. Honda<sup>3</sup>, J. Jugaku<sup>4</sup>, S. Kabe<sup>5</sup>,  
P. M. Kilmartin<sup>6</sup>, B. S. Koribalski<sup>8</sup>, Y. Matsubara<sup>1</sup>, K. Masuda<sup>1</sup>,  
Y. Muraki<sup>1</sup>, T. Nakamura<sup>9</sup>, G. R. Nankivell<sup>10</sup>, M. Reid<sup>11</sup>,  
N. J. Rumsey<sup>10</sup>, To. Saito<sup>12</sup>, H. Sato<sup>9</sup>, M. Sekiguchi<sup>3</sup>, D. J. Sullivan<sup>11</sup>,  
T. Sumi<sup>1</sup>, Y. Watase<sup>5</sup>, T. Yanagisawa<sup>1</sup>, P. C. M. Yock<sup>7</sup> and  
M. Yoshizawa<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Solar-Terrestrial Environment Lab, Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan

<sup>2</sup>Carter Observatory, Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>3</sup>Inst. Cosmic Ray Research, University of Tokyo, Japan

<sup>4</sup>Institute for Civilization, Tokai University, Japan

<sup>5</sup>High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK), Tsukuba, Japan

<sup>6</sup>Dept. of Physics & Astronomy, University of Canterbury, N.Z.

<sup>7</sup>Dept. of Physics, University of Auckland, N.Z.

<sup>8</sup>Australia Telescope National Facility, Epping, Australia

<sup>9</sup>Research Inst. Fundamental Physics, Kyoto University, Japan

<sup>10</sup>Lower Hutt, N.Z.

<sup>11</sup>Dept. of Physics, Victoria University Wellington, N.Z.

<sup>12</sup>Tokyo Metropolitan College of Aeronautics, Japan

<sup>13</sup>National Astronomical Observatory, Mitaka, Japan

**Abstract.** A review of the MOA (Microlensing Observations in Astrophysics) project is presented. MOA is a collaboration of approximately 30 astronomers from New Zealand and Japan established with the aim of finding and detecting microlensing events towards the Magellanic Clouds and the Galactic bulge, which may be indicative of either dark matter or of planetary companions. The observing program commenced in 1995, using very wide band blue and red filters and a nine-chip mosaic CCD camera.

As a by-product of these observations a large database of CCD photometry for 1.4 million stars towards both LMC and SMC has been established. In one preliminary analysis 576 bright variable stars were confirmed, nearly half of them being Cepheids. Another analysis has identified large numbers of blue variables, and 205 eclipsing binaries are included in this sample. In addition 351 red variables (AGB stars) have been found. Light curves have been obtained for all these stars. The observations are carried out on a 61-cm f/6.25 telescope at Mt John University Observatory where a new larger CCD camera was installed in 1998 July. From this latitude ( $44^\circ$  S) the Magellanic Clouds can be monitored throughout the year.

## 1. Introduction

The MOA project **M**icrolensing **O**bservations in **A**strophysics is a collaboration of about 30 astronomers/physicists in New Zealand and Japan working in about 10 different institutions (headquarters Nagoya and Auckland universities). The project was established in 1995. The MOA project goals are (a) the search for dark matter by microlensing in the galactic halo, (b) the search for planets by microlensing, in halo and galactic bulge, (c) the study of variable stars in the Magellanic Clouds and bulge and (d) the optical identification of  $\gamma$ -ray bursters (GRBs)

The observational program is undertaken on the 61-cm Boller & Chivens telescope at the University of Canterbury's Mt John University Observatory in the centre of the South Island of New Zealand. Here there is a dark sky background and typically 1–3 arcsec seeing; between a third and a half of the weather is suitable for CCD photometry. At the latitude of  $44^\circ$  S, the Magellanic Clouds are circumpolar and can be observed all year.

The telescope is a Ritchey-Chrétien cassegrain instrument modified to accommodate wide-field f/6.25 optics and a modern computer control system.

## 2. Observing program

Three series of MOA observations have been undertaken as follows

1. Jan 1996 – Dec 1996 f/13.5 Cass.  $30' \times 30'$ , MOAcamI

2. Jan 1997 – Aug 1998 f/6.25 Cass.  $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$ , MOAcamI
3. Aug 1998 – present f/6.25 Cass.  $0.92^\circ \times 1.39^\circ$ , MOAcamII

In all cases, very broad-band *B* and *R* filters have been used, covering respectively about 395–620 nm ( $\lambda_{\text{eff}} \simeq 500$  nm) and 620–1050 nm ( $\lambda_{\text{eff}} \simeq 700$  nm) (see Fig. 1). Series 1 used the f/13.5 optics and encompassed  $\simeq 3 \times 10^5$  stars in three LMC fields. Series 2 covered three fields (nlmc1,2,3) in the LMC bar ( $1 \times 10^6$  stars) plus two SMC fields (smc1,2) ( $4 \times 10^5$  stars).

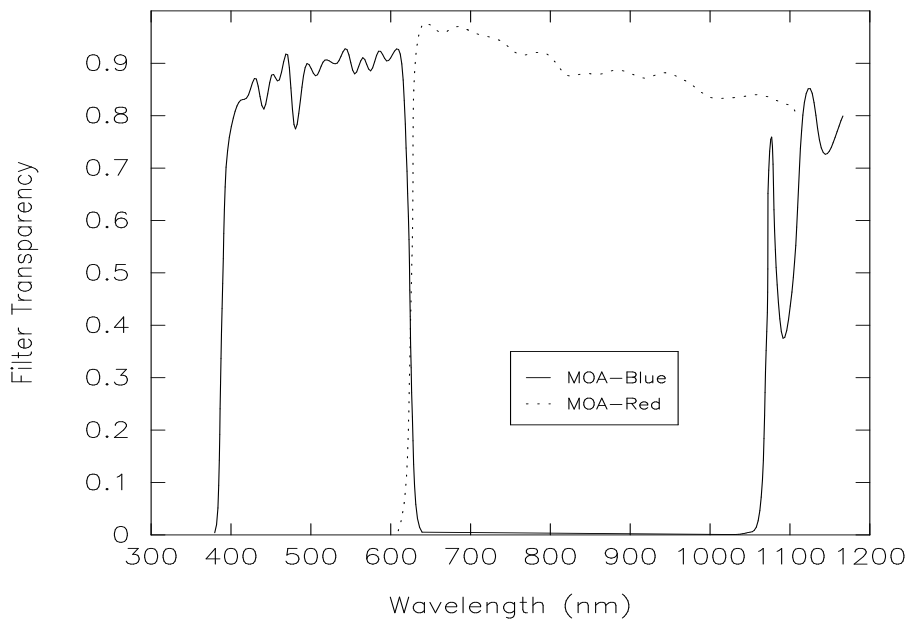


Figure 1. MOA filter functions in *B* and *R* broad bands

For series 3, which is currently in progress, the new MOAcamII is used to observe 16 LMC fields (all year) ( $\sim 3 \times 10^6$  stars) plus 8 SMC fields (all year) ( $\sim 1 \times 10^6$  stars) plus 16 galactic bulge fields (winter only) ( $\sim 5 \times 10^6$  stars). Each of the MOAcamII fields covers about 1.25 square degrees. Exposure times are 5 min. in *B* and *R* in the Clouds, 3 minutes in the Galactic bulge.

The CCD camera MOAcamI comprises a mosaic of nine TI TC215  $1000 \times 1018$  pixel CCDs whose pixel size is  $12 \mu\text{m}$  ( $\equiv 0.3''$  at f/13.5,  $0.65''$  at f/6.25). The chips are not butted, so four consecutive interleaved exposures are required to cover a  $1^\circ \times 1^\circ$  field.

The recently acquired MOAcamII has now replaced the first camera. It consists of three butted SITE  $2048 \times 4096$ -pixel thinned, back-illuminated CCDs with  $15\text{-}\mu\text{m}$  pixels ( $\equiv 0.81''$  at f/6.25). The peak QE is 85%. The area of the CCD surface is  $6.1 \times 9.2$  cm, and there are 24 Mpixels. Both cameras operated at a temperature of  $-100^\circ$  C with liquid  $\text{N}_2$ .

Generally we expose each Magellanic Cloud field once or sometimes twice per night in both  $B$  and  $R$ , and each Galactic bulge field about four times per night in  $R$  and once in  $B$ , unless a known high magnification microlensing event is in progress, in which case frequent successive exposures are made.

### 3. Data reduction

MOA observations of CCD images are recorded to 8-mm Exabyte tape for sending to Japan, while an archival copy on DLT tape is retained at Mt John. For series 1 and 2 observations, all the reductions have been completed using the DoPhot software package. One of us (I.B.) completed an archived database of all series 1 and 2 frames giving magnitudes in  $B$  and  $R$ . In the case of series 2 images, there are some 200 data points in each colour and about  $1.4 \times 10^6$  stars.

Series 3 images using MOAcamII have hitherto not been reduced. I. Bond is currently perfecting implementation of the Alard & Lupton (1997) difference imaging technique, which already has shown that a substantial improvement in photometric precision is possible for crowded fields in only moderate seeing. It is hoped to reduce series 3 images early in 2000 and then to be able to reduce all images on site at the observatory in nearly real time. A Sun Enterprise 450 computer with 90 Gbyte hard disk drive is used for on-site data analysis at Mt John.

Mt John  $B, R$  MOA photometry gives colours which transform linearly to Johnson colours, as calibrated by Reid, Dodd & Sullivan (1997), as follows:

$$(B - V)_J = 0.356 + 1.036(B - R)_{\text{MOA}}$$

$$(R - I)_J = 0.150 + 0.612(B - R)_{\text{MOA}}$$

The calibration of MOA magnitudes gives the following transformation from the MOA instrumental system to that of the HST Guide Star Catalogue.

$$m_R(\text{GSC}) = m_R(\text{MOA}) + 25.10$$

$$m_B(\text{GSC}) = m_B(\text{MOA}) + 24.82$$

The typical precision of the series 2 MOA magnitudes is  $\pm 0.13$  mag. at  $B$  or  $R \sim 19$ ;  $\pm 0.04$  mag. at  $B$  or  $R \sim 14 - 15$ .

### 4. Variable stars in the MOA database

Three surveys on variable stars in the MOA database have been undertaken or are in progress. One of these has been by S. Noda (Nagoya Univ., MSc) and M. Takeuti (Tohoku Univ., Sendai), and is a study of variables in series 2 observations. The stars are selected by several criteria (see Noda et al. in these proceedings). Periods have been obtained by the phase dispersion method (PDM). Important aspects of this study include:

- Study of red variables – mainly SR; 188 variables in the LMC, 35 in the SMC

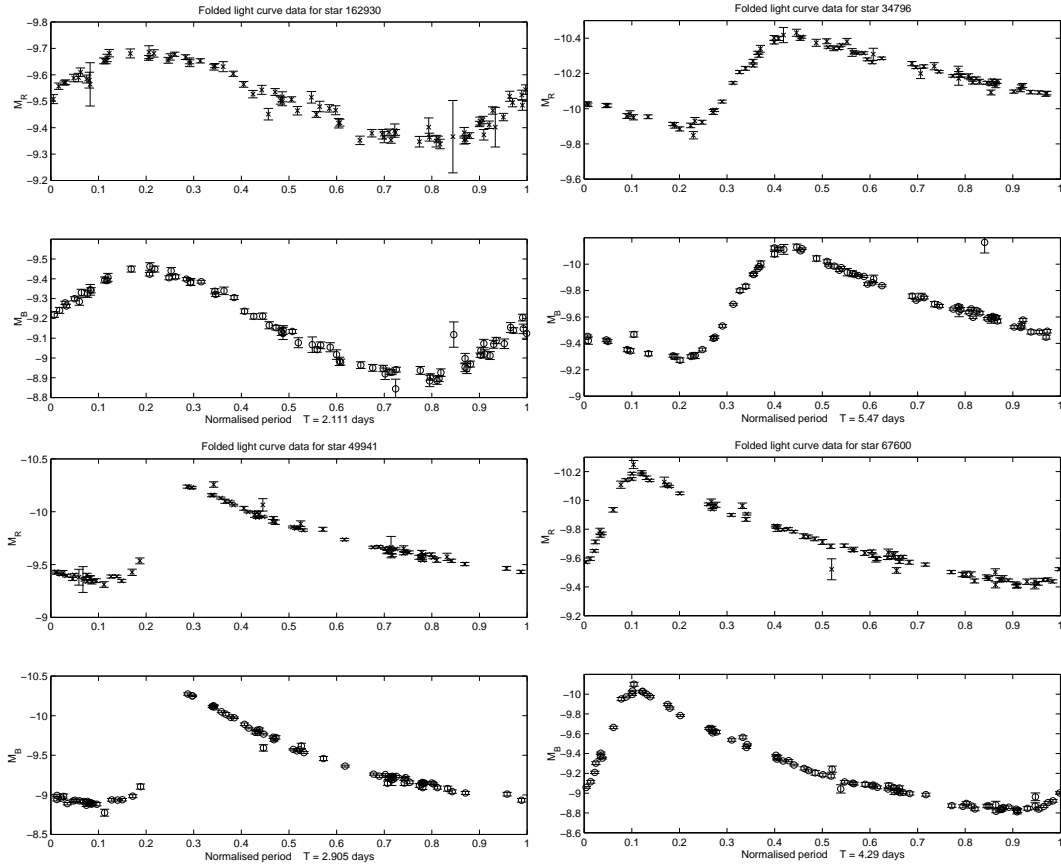


Figure 2.  $B$  and  $R$  phased light curves for four Cepheids in field smc2

- Study of eclipsing binaries; 69 EB in the LMC, 136 in the SMC
- Study of Cepheids; 78 in the LMC, 38 in the SMC
- Study of blue variables (many detected); may be Be stars, at least one is a so-called bumper, resembling a microlensing light curve

By using another selection, 282 AGB variables were found in the LMC and 69 in the SMC (see Takeuti et al. in these proceedings). The periods and the  $K$ -band magnitudes of most of these stars are comparable with those in the literature. The relation between the period and the mean colour for the AGB variables is reported.

Another study has been by N. Rattenbury (Auckland Univ., MSc), using selected MOA fields for series 1 and 2 data. Variable stars were detected by deriving the Welch-Stetson variability index (Stetson, 1996; Welch & Stetson, 1993). Only about 2% of the stars with greatest variability were selected for further study in this preliminary survey. Typically these stars have a range in the  $R$  magnitude exceeding  $12\sigma$ .

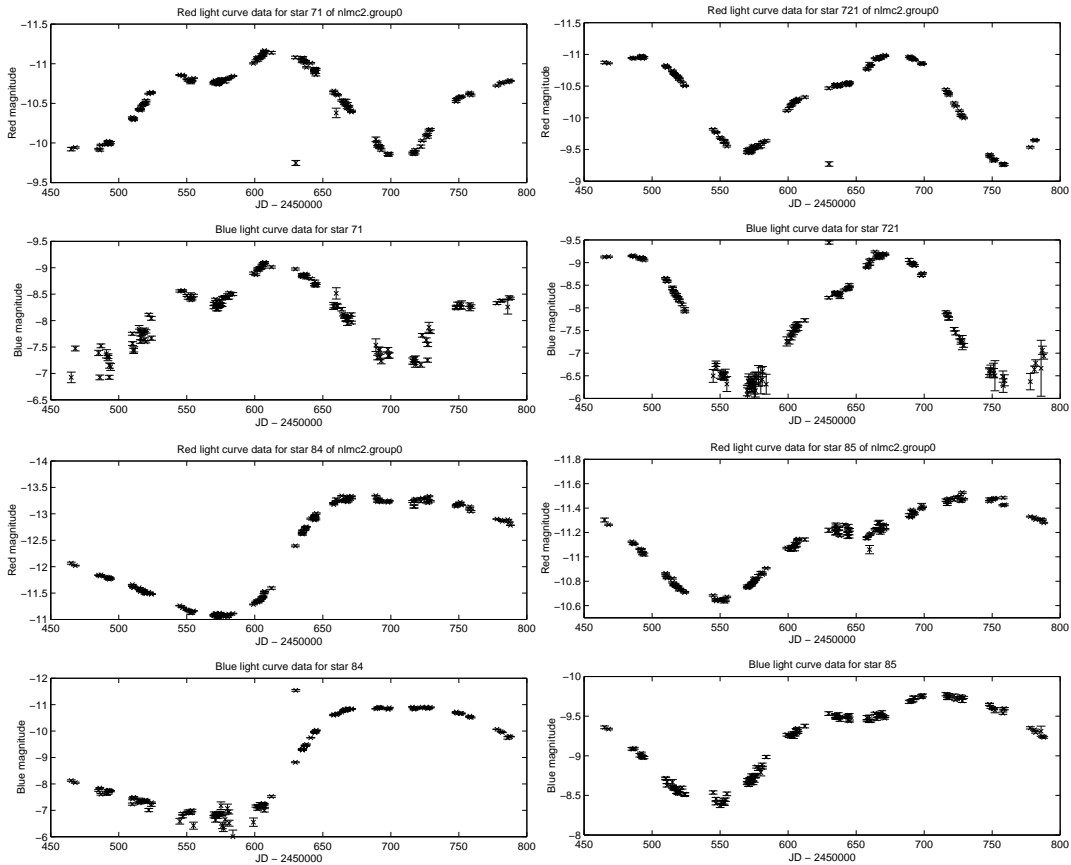


Figure 3.  $B$  and  $R$  light curves for four long-period red variables in field nlmc2

Periods were analysed in several ways, the most successful algorithm being the date compensated discrete Fourier transform (DCDFT) algorithm of Ferraz-Mello (1981). The following summarizes the preliminary results.

- Study of Cepheids (periods 1–10 d): 70 were identified in the LMC and 420 in the SMC
- Study of Cepheids or semi-regular variables ( $P$  10–50 d): 433 in the LMC, several more in the SMC
- Eclipsing binaries and RR Lyrae stars ( $P$  1–20 h): 7 in LMC, 71 in SMC
- Blue variables ( $(B - V)_J < 0.36$ ): 37 were identified in the SMC including 7 of long or irregular period, 2 possible “bumpers”, and at least 3 eclipsing binaries.
- Red variables with  $(B - V)_J > 1.65$  and  $P > 100$  d (LPV, SR): 89 were found in the SMC and 5 in the LMC

Fig. 2 shows  $B$  and  $R$  phased light curves for four of the Cepheids in the field smc2 (series 2). Fig. 3 shows unphased quasi-periodic light curves for four long period variables from field nlmc2 (series 2).

Finally G. Bayne, W. Tobin and J. Pritchard (Univ. Canterbury, N.Z.) are searching the MOA database for eclipsing binaries and analysing the light curves (series 1, 2). This work is still in progress, using the period-searching algorithm of Grison (1994).

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